

All in the OLPH family

Strong Mind.

Strong Body.

Strong Soul.

A long ago billboard in Philadelphia, Noelle Hildreth's hometown, touted the benefits of Catholic schools. Her husband, John, experienced more of the same growing up in the Archdiocese of Washington. Raising a family in the Archdiocese of Baltimore, they found a surfeit of similarly strong Catholic educational options.

Their four daughters all went to Maryvale Preparatory School in Lutherville. James, their youngest, will follow his two brothers to Mount St. Joseph High School in Irvington. He is in the class of 2019 at Our Lady of Perpetual Help School in Ellicott City, which educated all six of his siblings.

"I just told Noelle, I don't know what it's going to be like here without a Hildreth," said Florence Hahner, academic dean at the pre-K-8.

Hahner got there in 1995, the same year Christopher and Chelsea, the oldest, entered the fourth and second grades at OLPH School, respectively. She taught math to all seven, finally getting James this year.

What does a Hildreth bring to the classroom?

"You get a child who's determined," Hahner said. "They give great effort in everything they do. They also have an incredible sense of right and wrong. Family and faith are two huge pieces in every single one of them."

The Catholic University of America in Washington, D.C., played a part in bringing the Hildreths together. John was in the class of 1983, when the student body included Noelle's sister, Grace Ann Coleman.

In order, Noelle attended the parish school at St. Matthias in Merion, Pa.; Archbishop John Carroll High in Radnor; and then St. Joseph University in

Philadelphia, before finishing her undergraduate work at the University of Maryland.

Before he studied engineering, John went to Good Counsel High School when it was in Wheaton. It's run by the Xaverian Brothers, the same order that sponsors Mount St. Joseph. At the parish school at St. Joseph in Beltsville, he was taught by the Sisters of Notre Dame de Namur - the same order that founded Maryvale.

Like the other four Catholic schools in Howard County, OLPH has been recognized as a National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence.

"We were surrounded by good options, but from the minute we got there, we knew it was the right school," John said.

James is an altar server at OLPH, where his parents enjoy the seamlessness between the parish led by Father Erik Arnold, their pastor, and the school, where Victor Pellechia is the principal.

"The faith formation is everywhere," Noelle said. "Mr. Pellechia has done a fantastic job of integrating faith formation into the curriculum. ... Reading, arts, PE, all of it, are integrated into the whole person."

Father Arnold noted the family's commitment to the OLPH community.

"They are dedicated to the life of the school," he said. "In this day and age, people tend to be transitory, especially in (an area) like ours, with so many government and military workers. We're blessed to have them."

Athletics are a big part of the Hildreth family.

One daughter or another played field hockey, soccer, basketball, softball or ran for Maryvale.

"We call it the Maryvale way," John said of its ethos. "The girls are equals on the field, and in the classroom, and treat one another that way in life."

Sean played football for Mount St. Joseph. James hopes to play baseball for the Gaels. Christopher, an All-Metro infielder in 2004, began exploring the school when it included Mark Teixeira, who won five Gold Gloves during a 14-year major league

career.

The son of a D.C. policeman who was originally from New York, John's affinity for the Yankees goes beyond sharing a collegiate alma mater in CUA with Brian Cashman, their general manager. He vividly recalls a World Series pitting New York's teams reverberating on the OLPH campus.

"Miss Hahner is an avid Mets fan," John said. "During the 2000 World Series, we didn't speak for three weeks."

Long line

James Hildreth is the seventh sibling to attend Our Lady of Perpetual Help School in Ellicott City. An eighth-grader, he'll follow his brothers to Mount St. Joseph High School. His sisters all went to Maryvale Preparatory School. His siblings are listed below, with the year they graduated from OLPH and colleges where they did undergraduate work.

Christopher, 2000 - St. Joseph's University

Chelsea, 2002 - Boston University

Carolyn, 2004 - Catholic University

Meghan, 2008 - Tulane University

Sean, 2011 - University of Alabama

Shana, 2013 - St. Joseph's University